



Town of Brookline

Massachusetts

PLANNING BOARD

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Mark J. Zarrillo, Chairman
Linda K. Hamlin, Clerk
Robert Cook
Steven A. Heikin
Steven R. Kanés
Sergio Modigliani
Jonathan Simpson

BROOKLINE PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES **Selectmen's Hearing Room, Sixth Floor, Brookline Town Hall** **January 30, 2014 – 7:30p.m.**

Board Present: Mark Zarrillo, Linda Hamlin, Robert Cook, Steven Kanés, Steve Heikin, Jonathan Simpson, and Sergio Modigliani

Development Team Present: Marc Levin, Robert Zuker, Steven Schwartz, Joseph Geller, Theo Kindermans, Frank Holmes, Gary Lowe, Margaret Murphy, Robert J. Michaud

Public Present: Scott Gladstone, Anthony Brown, Alisa Jonas, Nancy Fulton, Judi Leichtner, James Solverson, William Pu, Beverly Basile, Robert Basile, Steve Chiumenti

Staff Present: Alison Steinfield, Polly Selkoe, Joslin Murphy, Timothy Richard

Mark Zarrillo called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Presentation of Site Plan and Elevation by Applicant Team

Attorney Steve Schwartz introduced the development team. CHR Mark Levin gave the history of the property and described the existing development and the proposed project. Joe Geller, Stantec, showed the site plan, circulation roads and pedestrian circulation. Gary Lowe, architect, described the architectural styles and details of the surrounding neighborhood, existing Hancock Village townhouses, and the proposed buildings. Stantec Engineer Bobby Shell described the stormwater management and the porous pavement that will be used and showed the site utilities – sewer and water connections. Traffic Engineer Robert Michaud gave a summary of the traffic study intersections and stated that the capacity of the roadways was adequate to handle the slight increase in traffic. Attorney Steve Schwartz concluded the power point presentation.

Planning Board Questions and/or Comments

Robert Cook asked about the trees that were likely to be lost as a result of the proposal. As an example, he noted a particularly large oak tree near Building 12. If the building were slightly relocated, it might be possible to save the tree. He asked what process will be available to discuss such siting issues for buildings and parking lots.

Steve Schwartz responded that during meetings with town staff and consultants, these issues will be discussed.

Robert Cook stated that it sounds like CHR was open to discussing siting and design issues.

Linda Hamlin mentioned that she was concerned with the siting of the buildings, along with the expense of having underground parking on a rock outcropping. For the townhouses, why couldn't the driveway be on the other side to provide more distance between the townhouses and the Beverly and Russett Road homes. Also, the architecture is similar to many other developments that CHR has built and therefore these buildings are not designed for this site. There needs to be walkability from the units to shopping.

Steve Heikin asked if the applicants had the right to access Building 12 from the VFW Parkway. The applicant said that they did not have the option to access Building 12 from the VFW Parkway. Mr. Heikin thought that relocating the apartment building and the underground garage from the east side of the property to the west side would be a better option because it would be more cost effective and prevent the excavation of the rock outcrop. He also thought the townhouses should be moved closer to the existing buildings to close off the courtyards.

Jonathan Simpson asked about the siting and wondered why they didn't make the apartment building taller so they could have less infill units. The applicant said that the apartment building did have five stories at one point, but the town and neighbors did not like that option and preferred something smaller. Further, a townhouse style provided a diversity of unit type and was preferred by some people.

Jonathan Simpson asked if the applicant would be flexible about making changes.

Schwartz stated that no significant changes could be made to the siting of the buildings.

Mark Zarrillo asked if they could do a cut and fill diagram with the existing trees overlaid. This would help in analyzing which trees could be saved.

Mark Zarrillo thought that there should be more of an urban core, which would be smart growth, and more effort to conserve open space with the proposal. There is no uniformity to the open space nor is the building placement on the site and the organization of the circulation and parking good. First, the open space should be organized and then the buildings integrated into it. He asked if access is allowed from a less dense area to a more dense area.

Steve Schwartz replied that he will look into whether or not access is allowed from a less dense area to a more dense area. One problem with a redesign of the layout is that the non-conformity of the existing buildings can't be increased because the applicant doesn't want to seek zoning

relief under 40A. Also, the NCD would constrain any changes to the existing buildings without Preservation Commission approval.

Sergio Modigliani asked for clarification of where there are retaining walls and how big they are. Mr. Modigliani said that the buffer zone landscape has a rolling feel and this proposal would create a dramatic transformation of a defining characteristic of the site.

Sergio Modigliani asked if they had looked into shadow studies and said that he had concerns for the buildings to the north. The applicant said that because of the grade changes they had little concern that there would be significant shadows caused by this proposal, but they would look into it. Steve Heikin also thought that moving some of the buildings to the south would reduce the shadow impacts on Russett Road.

Public Questions and/or Comments

Scott Gladstone stated that he was on the earlier Hancock Village Planning Committee when the developer was asking for 490 units. At that time, the neighbors asked them not to impact the green buffer space. He hopes there will be a condition requiring the preservation of this green space by conservation restriction. One of the earlier proposals was to take down a building on Independence Drive in order to access the SW quadrant and he would support moving the apartment building to this side of the site.

Bill Pu thought that the density of this project was much too great for the neighborhood, the buildings were not integrated with the surroundings, and the Chapter 40B design guidelines were not met. He did not think this was Smart Growth and was opposed to the project.

Steve Chiumenti thought that the apartment building was too tall and the townhomes too close to the adjacent single family homes. Although there will be 39 more affordable units in Brookline, it will eliminate the green space. The Fire Chief is also concerned about safe emergency access with the proposed dead-end road.

Judy Leichner was involved in the NCD commission and said that Chestnut Hill Realty never responded to the NCD Commission's invitation to work with them to develop an appropriate project.

Alisa Jonas stated that MassDevelopment did not approve CHR's first application, and this design does not address any of the design concerns mentioned in MassDevelopment's denial letter that was never sent. The landscaping at Hancock Village was originally designed by the Olmsted firm and this proposal will negatively impact that. She pointed out that the ZBA had previously denied even parking in the buffer zone, and this proposal has much greater density than the surrounding area.

Mark Zarrillo closed public comment.

Robert Cook said he hoped that the Planning Board would take a position that a continuing design review process by the developer in collaboration with the Planning Board would help improve the project.

Linda Hamlin said that the Board wants the best project for the applicant and for the Town and hopes that the applicant would work with the Town to develop a project that would benefit them and the Town alike.

Steven Heikin and Linda Hamlin favored an alternative plan that has some similarities to CHR's early plan.

Steve Schwartz explained CHR is not interested in moving the buildings to other locations on the site and that the property is separately owned.

Steve Heikin noted that CHR could create a revised subdivision to further the design.

Robert Cook stated that he would like to know how decisions were made for locating the buildings. He would be interested in a deeper conversation with the developers because the current plan is not optimal.

Steven Heikin said the Planning Board would welcome the opportunity to work with the developer on the design.

Sergio Modigliani recommended that a design review team work with the development team.

Steve Schwartz stated that CHR will not commit to a DAT.

The Planning Board asked Polly Selkoe to incorporate their comments into a recommendation to the ZBA and to show them a draft at its next meeting.

Meeting adjourned.